



# Research Fellowship in Design

## Deep design & human creativity in an age of AI and uncertainty

£50k per year for 2 years | Closing Date for applications 15 September 2026

### **Purpose**

To explore how designers can safeguard, evolve, and express uniquely human creativity, judgment, and embodied making in an era of AI acceleration.

While industry currently uses AI to optimise supply chains, energy efficiency, and resource circularity, a critical gap remains in how design-led thinking can act as the enabler to unlock these technologies effectively without losing the human edge.

We seek to identify, support and develop designers best placed to flourish in the age of AI, perhaps including craftspeople and those working by hand, or those who are neuro-diverse. We seek to embrace the messiness of the human brain and the frailty of the human character. That which truly drives creativity; the underlying essence of great design that AI may struggle to match.

The fellowship should show how human craft, cognition, intuition and relational intelligence can be integrated with (or intentionally set apart from) AI systems to improve design outcomes.

### **Output**

Fellows must produce at least one major output of value. Applications should be grounded in usable outcomes beyond speculative thought experiments. This should offer leadership for future designers or lead directly into future projects. The Fellowship might show how human reasoning can improve or transcend an algorithmic path, or produce a definitive, practice-ready system, framework, archetype, or model for future designers.

By way of example:

1. **A Field Guide for Human-Centred Creativity in the Age of AI**
  - A structured, illustrated guide used by design teams and studios.
  - Includes tested practices, methods, and principles.
2. **A Set of Demonstrator Projects (1–3 case studies)**
  - Real or prototype design interventions showing human–AI hybrid processes.
  - May include materials, services, spatial concepts, or digital tools.
3. **A Tested Methodology**
  - A repeatable “Deep Design” methodology for managing uncertainty, maintaining cognitive depth, and supporting cross-disciplinary reasoning under AI-accelerated conditions.
  - Includes toolkits, workshop formats, and teaching material.
4. **Significant Exhibition or Public Work**
  - A designed public installation or exhibition that *visually and experientially* communicates the role of human creativity under algorithmic conditions.

These are simply illustrative examples and should not be taken to constrain applications in any way. We would welcome all and any responses that map to the overarching purpose of this brief.

Entries will be accepted not only from individuals but also from formal or informal partnerships. Candidates should be UK based aiming to carry out research over a 2 year period culminating in a milestone output of significance. In all cases candidates should identify a mentor who can contribute objectively to the project and widen the reach of outputs to help make a difference. Please see the following **Terms and Conditions** for full details.

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